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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 002146

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FOR EUR/RUS AND DRL

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [OSCE](#) [PHUM](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: MIXED SIGNALS AS RUSSIA PREPARES FOR OSCE HUMAN
DIMENSION MEETING

REF: STATE 76294

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Alice G. Wells for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. Leading up to this year's OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) reacted positively to US concerns and, despite a July 23 MFA statement reiterating criticisms of ODIHR, was positively disposed to the upcoming visit of ODIHR Director Ambassador Janez Lenarcic. However, Russian Central Election Commission (CEC) Deputy Chair Igor Borisov claimed July 23 and 24 that past ODIHR election observers were spies and threatened to take away Russian funds for observers. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) Per reftel request, Poloff delivered US comments and concerns to Tatyana Sulitskaya, European Council section chief in the MFA. Sulitskaya, who had just returned two months ago from Strasburg and served previously at the OSCE, confirmed that Russia will bring a large delegation to the OSCE Human Dimension meeting. Sulitskaya does not yet know who will head the delegation.

Election Observation and ODIHR

¶3. (C) Sulitskaya welcomed the upcoming visit of the new head of ODIHR, Ambassador Janez Lenarcic from Slovenia, who will travel to Moscow in September. Sulitskaya said the GOR was positively disposed to the consultations, despite the GOR's undiminished concerns over ODIHR's practices. The MFA used a July 21-22 OSCE-sponsored seminar in Vienna to raise again its concerns over "serious problems in the sphere of election observation, in particular, the activities of ODIHR in this track." CEC Deputy Chairman Igor Borisov took a harder line in a July 24 press conference. He told reporters that the GOR might discontinue funding of ODIHR election observers -- which he estimated at USD 6 million per year -- if the OSCE rejects principles proposed by Russia governing international observers. On July 23, Borisov had claimed that among the members of OSCE international election observers sent to the former Yugoslavia, Georgia and Ukraine were representatives of security services of other countries.

USG Concerns on Media, NGOs and Religious Freedom Passed

¶4. (C) Sulitskaya agreed that the Russian Duma's recent rejection of a proposed law that would have allowed media outlets to be closed for libel without a court order was encouraging and gave most of the credit to members of the Public Chamber who voiced their disapproval of the proposed legislation.

¶5. (C) Sulitskaya admitted she was unaware of Premier Putin's recent edict eliminating the existing tax-free status for grants by certain international NGOs but promised to raise it with Alexander Orlov, head of the MFA Department of Relations with the Regions, Parliament and Public Organizations. She noted that he will be the person responsible for the MFA's input into the new regulations on this issue. Poloff sent the relevant edict, as well as the 2003 draft Ministry of Finance guidelines on this matter for her review.

¶6. (C) Sulitskaya noted the large number of religious organizations operating within the Russian Federation. She acknowledged that fully implementing decisions from the European Court of Human Rights in Strasburg that favor religious organizations remained difficult because of strong opposition within Russian society, particularly parents of young adults who have joined nontraditional religions.
RUBIN